

Derek Underwood (England 1966 to 82)

As a youngster, Derek Underwood went to Croydon for coaching from Ken Barrington, John Edrich and Tony Lock. Afterwards Lock recommended Underwood to Kent for his batting. Lock clearly knew a thing or two, as in Derek's debut Test innings he shared in a record partnership for England with Basil D'Oliveira. Admittedly, this was 65 for the tenth wicket and "shared' is rather an ambitious word for my part, for my contribution was 12!" confessed the debutant. The record stood for six weeks; supplanted by the heroics of John Snow and Ken Higgs at the Oval. In the second innings of his debut Test, Underwood "might easily have ended up in a Nottingham hospital", as he was hit in the head by a bouncer from Charlie Griffith. John Snow, at the other end saw Underwood react quickly enough for his glove to take some pace off the ball, but "he was pretty dazed for some minutes after, but pluckily carried on."¹

Underwood's first Test was an augury for his career as England nightwatchman: participating in notable partnerships against ferocious pace attacks, while taking hard knocks, largely in an era without helmets. Sunil Gavaskar, after recollecting Derek's wonderful bowling, remembered;

"As a batsman too, he has been a stubborn customer and many times he has gone in as a nightwatchman and done a very commendable job of not only seeing the day through, but also taking the sting out of the attack when the play resumed the next day."

Trevor Bailey, whose recognition of a resistance fighter cannot be disputed, said;

"He was a useful tail-ender who quite correctly believed in staying within his limitations, which consisted of the forward defensive, a productive cut, a bottom-hand push and a strange shovel shot which sent the ball usually in the air somewhere between mid on and mid wicket. Unlike many lower order batsmen he was not afraid of fast bowling and was therefore often used as a nightwatchman by England ... A quiet naturally modest man with a generous spirit (though the last never applied to his bowling), he serves as proof that it is possible to reach the very top in sport and still remain completely unspoilt."

Underwood's first stint as nightwatchman for England came in February 1973. By then, he had demonstrated a penchant for the job. He used the shifts to record his best scores. Underwood followed his first representative nightwatchman innings (for England Under-25s in Karachi in February 1967) with one for Kent at the Oval in late June 1967. He was sent in to protect his captain Colin Cowdrey. The innings afforded mixed blessings. Derek made his highest first-class score of 47, but in the process so impressed his captain that he condemned himself to the role for his county and for England. Two years later at Old Trafford Underwood improved his batting record, again as nightwatchman, celebrating his recall to the England squad. His innings was reported in the local press:

"The most significant innings for Kent was inescapably that of Underwood who stayed there for three and a half hours and scored 80, which was 33 runs more than he had previously made in the first-class game. To be truthful, he did not look notably a better batsman when he was out than when he went in but Lancashire could neither beat his defensive prod, nor hold the ball when he offered a chance, nor cut out his scoring shots."

His fate as future England nightwatchman probably was further cemented in this match as he started his innings with Mike Denness at the other end. Denness, who fell to the first ball of the morning, had plenty of time to admire as Underwood saved his side from following-on, during a day when most of his team-mates struggled.

¹ Snow rushed to help the stricken Underwood, but retained his presence of mind. After all, some batting still had to be done against Griffith. So when a glass of water was brought out for Derek to drink Snow said "Whatever you do, don't spit it out on a length."

With these glowing references, Underwood was appointed to the post. His appearances as England nightwatchman are summarised in the table.

Date	Opponents	Venue	In	Out	Minutes	Score
Feb 1973	India	Bombay (Brabourne)	38-2	67-3	40	9
Jul 1973	West Indies	Oval	107-5	136-6	32	7
Feb 1974	West Indies	Jamaica	217-5	258-6	84	12
Jun 1974	India	Manchester	104-4	127-5	48	7
	India	Manchester	13-1	30-2	26	9
Aug 1974	Pakistan	Oval	14-1	143-2	184	43
Jul 1975	Australia	Birmingham	75-6	87-8	25	10
Jul 1976	West Indies	Leeds	140-5	148-6	15	0
Aug 1976	West Indies	Oval	303-5	323-6	28	4
Mar 1977	Australia	Melbourne	19-1	34-3	28	7
Jan 1980	Australia	Sydney	29-3	105-5	135	43
Jun 1980	West Indies	Lord's	220-5	231-6	13	3
Jan 1982	Pakistan	Calcutta (Eden Gardens)	188-5	216-6	43	13

Derek Underwood's NWM Appearances in Test matches

At Manchester in June 1974 Underwood became only the third player to serve as nightwatchman in both innings of a Test. The first was George Paine, England's slow-left arm bowler, who was nightwatchman twice for Walter Hammond at Georgetown in February 1935. Paine had to face a fearsome trio of pace bowlers; Manny Martindale, Learie Constantine and Leslie Hylton². "Paine, sent in overnight to play out time, defended stubbornly" (*Wisden*) for three hours, scoring 49, the highest score in England's first innings. In the second George was again successful, scoring 18, as the Test was drawn.

West Indies v England, Second Test, Jamaica, February 1974

Leaving London for the Caribbean in January 1974, the England captain said his team intended to return "with our heads held high." The oft-made promise on departure was considered optimistic. First, the West Indies had just beaten England in a three-Test series 2-0. Second, the captain, newly-installed Mike Denness, had not been selected to play in any of the English summer's six Tests. Ray Illingworth, returning from a rest in the 1972-73 winter, had led England to a 2-0 victory in three Tests against New Zealand and then into the home series against the West Indies. In what he regarded as the blackest moment of his playing career, the selectors, huddled behind the pavilion during the bomb scare at Lord's, in the middle of the final Test decided to sack Illingworth. Denness, who had been vice-captain under Tony Lewis the previous winter, was installed partly because of his success at the helm at Kent. The selectors clearly did not rate Denness highly enough as a player to give him a Test place, so his elevation must be attributed to his captaincy skills. Some suggested, however, that Kent were so laden with talented players, anyone could have led them to success.

Pessimism grew when England lost the First Test heavily at Port-of-Spain, despite at one point in their second innings being 328 for one. This was the West Indies' first Test win at home in 23 matches: their previous victory coming in April 1965 when they beat Australia at Georgetown. Somewhat surprisingly it was also the first time the West Indies had beaten England in a home Test for 20 years. After the match, Keith Fletcher remembered "we could almost hear the pundits proclaiming the likelihood of a 5-0 whitewash. To be fair, few of us would have staked our mortgage against it happening."

² Leslie Hylton was very popular in Jamaica. His fellow-islanders, outraged that he was not selected for the 1939 tour of England, raised money so he could join the squad. Hylton is the only Test cricketer known to have been executed, hanged in Jamaica in 1955 for the murder of his wife after she had confessed to adultery. Hylton claimed he had taken a six-shooter and attempted to kill himself after his wife had confessed, but missed and accidentally hit her. This defence was rendered somewhat dubious when seven bullets were found in his wife's body. The Fourth Test against Australia was being played when his case was heard. On the day Hylton received his sentence John Holt dropped three Australians in the slips before each of them had scored. The crowd was so incensed Holt needed police protection. Next morning a placard was seen at the Test match: "Save Hylton, Hang Holt"

The West Indies deepened the gloom at Jamaica. Despite winning the toss and choosing to bat England could manage only a “moderate” 353. The hosts illustrated the perfect batting conditions by taking a 230-run first innings lead, leaving England to bat out five sessions. They were making a good fist of it until John Jameson and Frank Hayes fell within ten minutes. In sympathy with England’s plight, the scoreboard collapsed soon after Hayes’s dismissal. By close of play both were, as the *Times* reported, “in disrepair.” However, the prospects of the scoreboard were the healthier, as England closed on 218 for five, having lost Denness and the Tony Grieg just before the close.

“West Indies heading for victory” headlined the *Jamaica Daily Gleaner*, “only a cricketing miracle or inclement weather can stop the West Indies taking a 2-0 lead.” Denness thought if England lost this Test “we would have little chance of rescuing the series.” Dennis Amiss appeared to have meagre support for the final day, and the West Indies could take a new ball after seven overs of the morning’s play. West Indies pacemen armed with a new ball didn’t at all worry Underwood, the nightwatchman in with Amiss. In fact, he couldn’t wait for those seven overs to be bowled, as Derek simply hated facing spinners hemmed in by close fielders³. “I didn’t fancy going to the wicket [the previous evening] because Kanhai had Gibbs bowling his off-spinners from one end, with local leg-spinning hero Arthur Barrett at the other.” Rohan Kanhai doubled the ring of fielders for Underwood; “Off the last ball of the day from Arthur Barrett, nine men, including the wicket-keeper were actually all round the bat waiting for the ball with open arms” (*Jamaica Daily Gleaner*). Underwood believed he got a nick to Barrett the evening but no-one appealed.

Lance Gibbs and Barrett opened the bowling on the last morning. Barrett had accounted for Jamieson and Denness the previous day, but “did not trouble either batsmen” (*Trinidad Guardian*). Yet Gibbs should have had Amiss taken in the first over. Amiss turned him firmly straight into the hands of backward short leg. For once, Garry Sobers couldn’t hang on to the sharp chance, and the ball fell to the ground. After that escape, Underwood “was quite relieved when I saw Kanhai call up Boyce and Julien to take the new ball, even though I knew I was going to get a few bouncers.” Keith Boyce was bowling with an injured heel, but found the energy to bowl aggressively.

After the new ball was taken *Wisden* enthused:

“England played cricket of real courage as pressure built up both on the field and in the crowd. Underwood, who had been sent in as nightwatchman, did as much as anybody to inspire it, batting on another seventy-five minutes into the last day and bravely fending off bouncers, particularly from Boyce, that became too numerous to be acceptable.”

Underwood took a modest view: “Boyce did not let me down. He was slipping two or three short pitched balls an over. Nothing was said by the umpires. They took the view that the wicket was so good and yet so slow that the short pitched deliveries were not dangerous enough to justify a warning for intimidation.” Amiss admired Derek from the other end:

“Soon we had the new ball to contend with and Boyce was again an awkward proposition as he again dug it in regularly short of a length, but Underwood got right behind the line and fended everything off very bravely. Once he walked down the pitch and asked me: ‘How am I doing?’ ‘Very well,’ I said. ‘Oh, am I really?’ he answered, and walked back looking very pleased. I suspect that innings gave him almost as much pleasure as some of his bowling performances.”

Bernard Julien, suffering no-ball problems, gave way after three overs to Sobers. Underwood defended dourly (*Trinidad Guardian*) and the first hour raised 30 runs off 16 overs. After reaching double figures with a boundary off Sobers through the slips Derek then edged a ball drifting away from him and was caught behind by Murray. Underwood had stayed with Amiss for 84 minutes.

³ Fellow nightwatchmen Harold Larwood (“Fast bowlers never worried me; it was the slow ones who gave me trouble”) and Dean Headley (“I wasn’t too bothered about playing against quick bowlers or fast-medium bowlers”) shared Derek’s preference.

Amiss then threatened to fritter away the excellent start by attempting a quick single to Clive Lloyd. Perhaps Sobers dropping the catch in the first over instilled hope of West Indian fallibility in the field. Amiss ought to have known better having, the previous day, sacrificed Hayes to Lloyd's arm. Certainly, Alan Knott betrayed doubts by hesitating fractionally and Lloyd demonstrated Amiss's folly by running out the England keeper. The dismissal invigorated the West Indies, but Amiss watched as "Chris Old withstood another barrage of bouncers to stay for a hundred minutes while we added another 72 runs and Pat Pocock, although scoring only 4 runs himself, survived for another valuable 85 minutes."

England saved the Test with "a memorable defensive action. The particular hero was Dennis Amiss whose 262 not out must rank as one of the finest inns ever played for England. Without Underwood, though, and Old and Pocock all of whom fought for all they were worth, the escape could never have been accomplished" (*Times*). The *Jamaica Daily Gleaner* considered: "Underwood batted very much according to the textbook. He is seldom an easy wicket to get when it really matters." Derek's was one of a series of match-saving performances. Denness was delighted with the tense day, every ball was watched by all the team, "looking out through the windows and willing every ball to go our way". The captain agreed with the general verdict: "Without Amiss's innings we would not have won through but there were equally important contributions from Underwood, Old and Pocock ... The West Indians were absolutely staggered that they had not won."

England 1 st innings 353 and West Indies 1 st innings 583-9 declared		
England 2 nd Innings (overnight 218-5: Amiss 123, Underwood 1)		
G Boycott	c Murray b Boyce	5
DL Amiss	not out	262
JA Jameson	c Rowe b Barrett	38
FC Hayes	run out	0
MH Denness	c Rowe b Barrett	28
AW Greig	b Gibbs	14
DL Underwood	c Murray b Sobers	12
APE Knott	run out	6
CM Old	b Barrett	19
PI Pocock	c sub (Holder) b Boyce	4
RGD Willis	not out	3
Extras		41

Total (9 wickets; 183 overs)		432
FOW: 1-32, 2-102, 3-107, 4-176, 5-217, 6-258, 7-271, 8-343, 9-392		

The *Times* assessed that had England lost, they would have been beyond recovery, but "now they will go to Barbados for the next Test feeling that they have everything to play for." They soon, however, once again felt the yoke of West Indian domination. Tony Cozier believed the hosts allowed victory in the Third Test to escape them; England having been 106 for five in their second innings still trailing by 95 runs. The Fourth Test was drawn too, rain interfering with a match in which England played well. Fletcher thought England had been "hopelessly outplayed by a very fine side" but managed to get to the final Test only 1-0 down by staging "survival shows" in two Tests to get out of jail⁴.

⁴ The pitch at St John's Antigua for the tour match after the Second Test was prepared by convicts from the local prison. On the first morning Mike Denness asked the one who was operating the roller how long he had been at it -- expecting an answer of quarter of an hour: "Two years, sir", was the cheerful reply, "and another ten to do."

According to Geoff Boycott, who agreed that England ought to have been 3-0 down on the relative merit of the teams by the time the sides returned to Port-of-Spain for the climax of the tour, relations between Denness and “practically everybody had worn wafer-thin.” Donald Carr, the manager, seemed clear that Denness’s appointment had been a failure. Boycott dined with E.W. Swanton after the first day of the final Test and was asked who he would chose as vice-captain were he given the captaincy. Boycott took from the dinner a feeling that he was favoured by the establishment, as Swanton was known to carry influence.

Ironically, it was Boycott, scoring 99 and 112 in a total of 800 minutes at the crease, who was instrumental in England winning the final Test. He and Tony Grieg, who took 13 wickets in the match, enabled England to square the series in an exciting encounter. The West Indies looked beaten at 166 for eight, chasing 226 to win. But Inshan Ali, batting with great composure, stayed in for an hour helping Keith Boyce add 31 for the ninth wicket. Amid much nervousness, Greig and Geoff Arnold ended the resistance with the new ball. England won by 26 runs. So, the rear-guard at Jamaica saved not only the Test but enabled England ultimately to salvage the series. The West Indies “failed to exploit fully an enormous superiority ... A share in the rubber was a worthy achievement for England” (Tony Cozier). Donald Carr clearly felt so and performed an abrupt volte face, prompting Boycott’s conviction that he had just batted himself out of the England captain’s job.

England v Pakistan, Third Test, Oval, August 1974

Head held high, Denness returned to continue his captaincy during the following English summer. After thrashing India in three Tests, the series against Pakistan started at Headingley. England’s 500th Test was interrupted on the opening morning by a bomb-hoax and was heading for an explosive finish, with England needing 44 to win with four wickets remaining, when rain provided the dampener. If Underwood had not wanted to face spin in Jamaica, he certainly enjoyed delivering it at Lord’s. Intikhab won the toss and batted. His openers were enjoying themselves when rain started with the score on 51 for no wicket. The regulations prevented the wicket being covered once play began for the day, although the bowler’s run-ups were protected. Five hours later in bright sunshine, once the pitch had dried for a while, Underwood took five for 20. On the second day England finished their first innings 140 runs ahead, but Wasim Raja and Mushtaq Mohammad fought back well and Pakistan went into the rest day on 173 for three.

Experimental covers, essentially tents filled with hot air, were being used at Lord’s. During the Sunday rest day they were subjected to heavy downpours, and the weather continued wet on the Monday. When the covers were removed, the pitch was found to be soaked. Pakistan’s manager, Omar Kureishi made an official protest, rightly claiming “that his side was entitled to bat on a pitch in the same condition as it was when the covers were put on on Saturday.” The MCC offered an apology and went on to produce more hot air in a long statement arguing an explanation. “The argument was pointless ... sympathies were firmly with Pakistan” said Tony Lewis in the *Cricketer*. The *Times* found “it hard to believe that it is beyond the wit of man to create, without vast expense, a set of covers for Lord’s, for all its nine feet fall [in elevation] to protect the pitch from even the heaviest of rain.”

Conditions improved enough for play to start at 5:15. Underwood took 6 wickets for 9 runs in 12 overs, to finish the innings with 8 for 51. England, chasing 87 to win closed on 27 without loss. The heavens delivered the means for justice; rain fell overnight. The umpires provided the final touch. According to the *Times*:

“The umpires I imagine were grateful for the chance to relieve the Pakistanis ... In the ordinary way Elliott and Constant, the umpires, might have forced a start in the early afternoon, the rain having stopped for the first time at around midday. As it was they took advantage of a passing shower at around 3 o’clock to abandon the match at half past four.”

So the series culminated at the Oval, but a pitch “so slow in pace that bowlers were reduced to impotence” seemed to preclude a worthy finale. The strip must have been dull as the *Karachi Dawn* referred to Imran Khan merely as a “medium pacer.” Nevertheless, Pakistan pressed towards victory by amassing 600 for seven, built around a splendid 240 from Zaheer Abbas. England began their reply about half-an-hour before close of play. They lost David Lloyd, but Underwood saw them through to 15 for one. Zaheer reckoned “there was never going to be the remotest chance of a result.” The *Times*, with greater familiarity with England’s batting foibles, knew the priority was saving the follow-on, “though the pitch is slow and the weather could be breaking up there is no need to stress what a task they have on hand.”

Amid a large noisy crowd under bright sun, Sarfraz Nawaz and Asif Masood began the day bowling with pace and hostility. Dennis Amiss played with calm authority from the start, but Underwood in the first hour was frequently beaten and took some painful blows on the inside of his leg, yet he did not let these trials bother him (*Karachi Dawn*). “He batted with all the decorum of a Test opener and sensibly left the shots to Amiss” (*Observer*). The day’s opening 14 overs brought 39 runs. Gradually, as the ball softened and the pace bowlers tired, Amiss and Underwood prospered. They reached lunch safely on 95 for one, and progress quickened in the afternoon. “Underwood was not restricted entirely to defence. He produced some good attacking shots” (*Wisden*). Derek had seen off five of Pakistan’s bowlers. The visitors reverted to their third leg-spinner Wasim Raja. In Wasim’s first over, Underwood drove him to the boundary for four. Attempting to sweep the next ball to surpass his highest Test score, Underwood fell leg before. “Underwood had a great part in Saturday’s rearguard, batting for three hours when at the start of the day he can hardly have entered into Pakistan’s calculations”, acclaimed the *Times*. “The psychological effect of this was at least as significant as the 129 runs Amiss and Underwood added together.”

England reached 293 for four by the close of play, Amiss on 168 not out. Pakistan might not have been able to stop Dennis, but the caterers obliged. Taken ill with food-poisoning over the rest day, Amiss was confined by his doctor to bed on Monday. Play was delayed by rain until the afternoon. When the resumption was in the offing, Amiss was called from his sick-bed, his legs feeling like jelly. He had added ten runs to his score, when he mistimed a pull off Sarfraz and was hit on the right cheekbone. Dazed and wobbly he almost passed out and was led from the field for an X-ray. No fracture was found but his jaw ached and he could hardly open his mouth. Recovering in the dressing-room, he was telephoned by a lady hypnotist and agreed to be entranced. Evidently charmed he had to be dragged from the phone booth when Geoff Arnold went in, leaving only Amiss and Bob Willis to bat. England managed to see out the draw. Dennis Amiss finished on 182, and had a marvellous 1974, scoring 1379 Test runs. Bobby Simpson was the only player to have surpassed that, with 1381 runs for Australia in 1964.

Pakistan 1st innings 600-7 declared		
England 1st Innings (overnight 15-1: Amiss 8, Underwood 1)		
DL Amiss	c Majid Khan b Intikhab Alam	183
D Lloyd	c Sadiq Mohammad b Sarfraz Nawaz	4
DL Underwood	lbw b Wasim Raja	43
JH Edrich	c Wasim Bari b Intikhab Alam	25
MH Denness	c Imran Khan b Asif Masood	18
KWR Fletcher	run out	122
AW Greig	b Intikhab Alam	32
APE Knott	b Intikhab Alam	9
CM Old	lbw b Intikhab Alam	65
GG Arnold	c Wasim Bari b Mushtaq Mohammad	2
RGD Willis	not out	1
Extras		41

Total (225.4 overs)		545
FOW: 1-14, 2-143, 3-209, 4-244, 5-383, 6-401, 7-531, 8-539, 9-539		
Amiss retired hurt from 305-4 to 539-9		
Pakistan 2nd innings 94-4		

Australia v England, Second Test, Sydney, January 1980.

Underwood had no need to worry about facing spinners at Sydney, six years later. Greg Chappell gave his leg-spinner, Jim Higgs, one over and then retrieved the ball saying: "Bad luck 'Gladdy', but why would I want to bowl a leg spinner who could turn the ball a foot, when the fast bowlers could cut it exactly as far but at eighty miles an hour?" The Sydney ground-staff left the wicket uncovered when they departed for *New Year's Eve* parties. An unseasonal thunderstorm and further rain over the following two days left a treacherous surface. Greg Chappell believed "the Test was virtually reduced to a toss of the coin." Chappell was stunned when the umpires decided play could start at 3.32 pm on the first day; "I didn't feel the pitch was fit for a start and I didn't think it was sensible to start ... although I know Mike Brearley thought the pitch was fit." Brearley believed "if we were to win the toss I thought we would win the match." Chappell said later that he was never so keen in his life to win a toss as he was to win that one. He did. England collapsed to 90 for seven. "England caught on nasty pitch" headlined the *Adelaide Advertiser*.

The atmosphere was as nasty as the pitch. This was the first Australia summer since the ACB made peace with Kerry Packer. Derek Underwood noticed little friction between WSC players and the others in the Australian side. Nonetheless, some Australian WSC players were abusive: Dennis Lillee and Ian Chappell, notably, regularly taunting Brearley. This did not help relations between the two teams, which had a large disparity in WSC players. Only four of the Australians who had played in the previous series against India were selected against England (Kim Hughes, Allan Border and Geoff Dymock and Jim Higgs). In the First Test at Perth and the Second Test at Sydney the Australian XI contained six WSC players. Eight former WSC players were in the Australian team for the Third Test. In contrast, only Underwood of the England party had played in WSC games.

Officials didn't escape the loutish behaviour. Six WSC players were reported by umpires for swearing in Sheffield Shield games. Ian Chappell served a suspended sentence for swearing but was treated lightly after throwing his bat away in disgust at an umpire in the match between South Australia and England. In the First Test Dennis Lillee managed to hold onto his bat (aluminium), despite waving it enthusiastically, and threw a tantrum instead. Eventually even the bat was hurled. All this drew little intervention from the ACB. After the inevitable caving into Kerry Packer, the ACB had promised to listen to the players and consider their needs. In the event the board was supine.

The commercial considerations of Publishing and Broadcasting Limited (PBL), Kerry Packer's company now responsible for marketing Australian cricket for the decade ahead, dictated the summer schedule⁵. Both the West Indies and England were invited to tour, each playing only three Tests against Australia, primarily to allow the staging of a long triangular series of 15 ODI matches to the WSC formula. The itinerary was ridiculously congested and arduous, with few four-day tour matches to prepare for the Tests. Relations between the two boards were embittered by Lord's refusing to put the Ashes at stake because of the unusually short Test series and because the ACB had to increase its guarantee to England players for the tour to go ahead at all. Brearley, who held out for better financial deals for his players, remembered, "We cobbled together a tour under pressure – not the sort of tour we wanted." The tour was hastily arranged because Channel Nine/PBL recognised that matches against the old enemy would sell seats and television advertising slots.

⁵ Ticket prices for the Tests rose from \$3 to \$5, and television coverage featured commercial breaks between overs with priority given to retailers over the cricket viewers. Over-running commercials prompted Scyld Berry of the *Observer* to comment: "In a major step this season, the ACB introduced a six-ball over, but Channel Nine often go one better with a five-ball over."

Playing regulations for the ODI had not been agreed before England arrived. The tourists refused to play ODI in pyjamas and would not accept the rule limiting the number of fielders allowed outside inner circles. The latter was objected to because Australia and the West Indies (whose team was also largely WSC players) had long experience playing under the rules, whereas England had not⁶. England also refused to limit the number of leg-side fielders. Negotiations carried on for the first three weeks of the tour and were not easy. The nasty atmosphere got uglier when an Australian official publically complained of “whingeing Poms”. Perhaps because the ACB felt powerless over the summer cricketing arrangements and towards its own players England were the only available target. The ACB descended so far into impotent farce as to insist the TCCB should pay for the electricity so England could practise under floodlights (another new playing phenomenon for the tourists). Eventually the ACB saw sense, but its attitude and public comments inflamed deeply partisan crowds and players. Ultimately, the ACB and their players were forced to eat humble pie: England won all four of their ODI against Australia, leaving their WSC players whining from the boundary as England contested the final against the West Indies.

Back to the Second Test at Sydney into which the tourists went one-nil down: England were dismissed in their first innings for 123 in 44 overs. Greg Chappell told the *Times* he wouldn't have backed Australia to score 100 had they batted first. The pitch was still grim when Australia replied. “To give you an idea of just how tough it was batting, I spent half an hour on eight, my 15 runs took me 80 minutes and I didn't hit one boundary”, recalled Border. Australia barely managed better, but their lead of 22 looked quite handy when England slipped to 29 for three in their second innings. Underwood was sent in as nightwatchman, and scored eight of the nine runs added before close of play.

On the third day, the pitch had eased a little, but still had plenty of life. The *Adelaide Advertiser* admired Underwood's approach: “he courageously placed his body in line with the fastest and shortest offerings from the Australian pace men, never flinching. He took some nasty blows on the fingers and in the ribs.” Adding to the batsmen's woes, the *Times* reported much more movement in the air than previously: “this morning Greg Chappell at his gentle medium pace moved it prodigiously.” Brearley and Underwood batted in difficult conditions for two hours. Underwood was grateful to his captain “who kept me going with our between-overs chats”. Brearley played calmly, but was outscored by Underwood who managed to thicken edge runs wide of the slips. They took the score to 79 for four, and then the England captain was caught behind off quite a nasty delivery from Len Pascoe. Underwood survived to lunch, thereby winning a crate of beer from Ian Botham, who greeted Derek in the pavilion with a cigarette: “Deadly, I think you need this.”

Derek Randall joined Underwood, and they took England into the afternoon. By then the *Times* believed “things were easing, considerably.” Underwood, having “looked shell-shocked after his two years with WSC, taking cover from West Indian bouncers, stuck at it” (*Times*) and “scratched and clawed his way to 43 in two hours and sixteen minutes of gritty resistance” (*Adelaide Advertiser*). Underwood played a lifting ball from Dymock firmly but straight into Border's mid-riff at short leg. Disappointed, Underwood was warmly acclaimed: “I shall never forget the standing ovation given me by the Sydney crowd as I walked back”.

When Derek was dismissed his score was the highest of the match. “His contribution was inestimable, particularly in terms of psychology. Nobody following him could now make excuses for not staying there”. So thought the *Guardian*, but only David Gower among the rest of the England batsmen took advantage of Derek's knock. *Wisden* observed that Gower “took over [from Underwood] to boost England's hopes of squaring the series.” Gower received meagre support and was stranded on 98 when England were dismissed for 237. Gower, generous as ever, enthused;

“While I might have top-scored, Derek Underwood made the best individual innings – he was hit all over the body during the course of an heroic 43. The Aussies are not easily impressed by the opposition, but on this occasion they applauded ‘Deadly’ all the way off the field.”

⁶ Ironically, having objected to limiting the number of out-fielders, Brearley interviewed on the morning of the Sydney Test on radio, said he thought the behaviour of Australian crowds so unruly, he considered it dangerous to place a fielder within 15 yards of the boundary for fear of his being hit by a missile.

England 1st innings 123 and Australia 1st innings 145		
England 2nd Innings (overnight 38-3: Brearley 3, Underwood 8)		
GA Gooch	c GS Chappell b Dymock	4
G Boycott	c McCosker b Pascoe	18
P Willey	b Pascoe	3
JM Brearley	c Marsh b Pascoe	19
DL Underwood	c Border b Dymock	43
DW Randall	c Marsh b GS Chappell	25
DI Gower	not out	98
IT Botham	c Wiener b GS Chappell	0
RW Taylor	b Lillee	8
GR Dilley	b Dymock	4
RGD Willis	c GS Chappell b Lillee	1
Extras		14

Total (96.3 overs)		237
FOW: 1-6, 2-21, 3-29, 4-77, 5-105, 6-156, 7-174, 8-211, 9-218		
Australia 2nd innings 219-4		

Tiger O'Reilly thought Underwood saved England from defeat by scoring "43 priceless runs at a time when England were struggling almost hopelessly for survival." Underwood's innings had gone further, helping to set Australia a testing target of 216 to win. Even though that was 40 or so runs short of what England had hoped to set, they felt they had a decent opportunity. They started off Australia's second innings by bowling well but without reward. Julien Wiener looked to have been dismissed twice by Willis, once leg before and once caught behind but was not given. Underwood then pinned Rick McCosker straight in front in the penultimate over of the day, but the umpire again was unmoved. Over a beer afterwards, McCosker assured Underwood he had got a thin edge to the ball. Australia lurched to 25 without loss by the close. England, though very disappointed at taking no wickets, were heartened by their start.

Sadly for them, the chance England had been given by Gower and Underwood was taken away by the weather and the rest day. Sydney's usual summer returned. As the players rested, a stiff wind and strong sunshine beat down on the wicket, "drying the pitch out into a batsman's dream" (Allan Border). Even on the transformed pitch Australia faced a crisis. On 100 for three, with Greg Chappell struggling to impose his authority (*Wisden*), a concerted appeal was made for his wicket to a catch behind off Graham Dilley. Umpire Robin Bailhache turned it down. Brearley said, "You saw from our reactions we thought it was out." After that alarm, Chappell and Kim Hughes, who Underwood remembered dominated from the start of his innings, took Australia home.

Derek Underwood had a couple more nightwatchman innings for England after Sydney. Undoubtedly his most memorable shift came for Kent at Hastings in June 1984. Derek was a very successful nightwatchman for his county. In his autobiography, Underwood writes that Chris Old remembered dismissing him as a nightwatchman. Old probably refers to the *August Bank Holiday* match at Bradford in 1972. Underwood was sent in as nightwatchman for Asif Iqbal, and Old had him caught behind for nine. But close of play was called after the wicket fell, so Derek had done his job. In all Underwood appears to have been nightwatchman 35 times for Kent, failing only on 4 occasions.

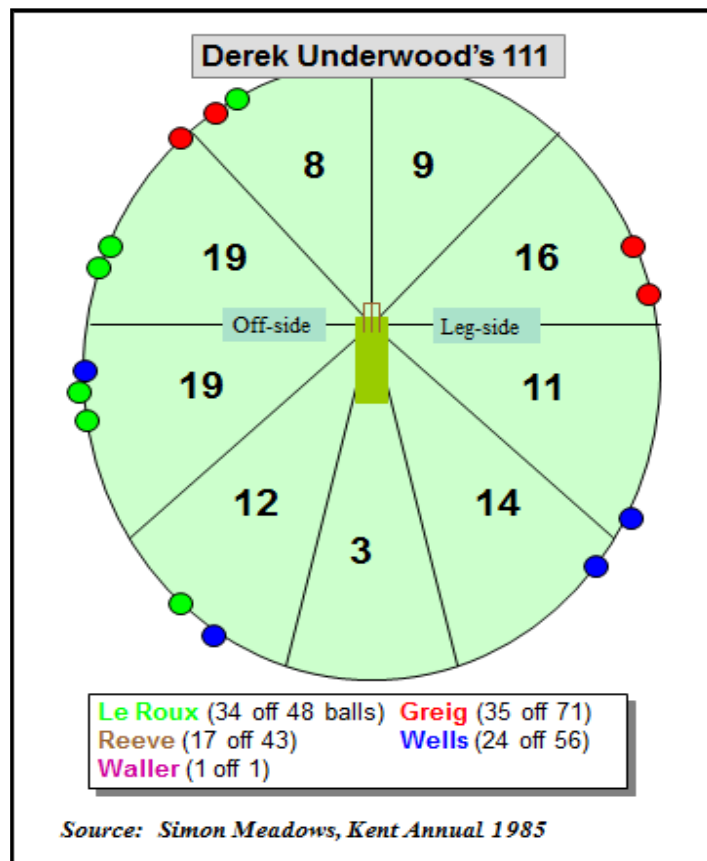
Hastings was special for Underwood, being the first first-class ground he had played on as a schoolboy. He had fond memories there from 1964 when he had taken 9 for 28 against Sussex. His return to his happy hunting ground in 1984 started disastrously. On Saturday evening, he found himself at the wicket as nightwatchman with Kent on 22 for one. Earlier that day on a troublesome wicket, Kent had been dismissed for 92 and Sussex for 145. On the Sunday, he had a break from his batting responsibility as the *John Player League* 40-over match intervened. The Gods smiled: Underwood from his eight overs returned his best *John Player League* bowling figures of 6 for 12.

Best County Championship bowling, best Sunday league bowling and in as nightwatchman - usually a source of good scores - what would Monday bring? Initially the answer was; 'carnage', as Kent slumped to 86 for six with their recognised batsmen removed. Conditions were even worse than Sydney. The pitch offered bounce and movement, and the ball swung all day under heavy clouds. Paceman Garth le Roux enjoyed himself, but "suffered a barrage of fours", victim to Underwood's "cross-bat cover drive" (*Times*). Underwood reached his fifty, off just 65 balls, with a text-book drive through mid on. A little before lunch, Derek was caught at short-leg and started walking to the pavilion before he realised the umpire had called 'no-ball'.

In the afternoon, le Roux gave Underwood a torrid time. Derek withstood the assault to pass his previous highest first-class score, the 80 he scored against Lancashire. He was by now batting rather more circumspectly. Two and a half hours after recording his fifty and in his twenty-second year in first-class cricket, Derek Underwood, to great rejoicing (*Times*) played "an excellent hook" (*Guardian*) off a short ball from Ian Greig to reach his century. Underwood was eventually dismissed after more than four hours. His 111 rescued Kent, who had been only 35 runs ahead with four wickets remaining. Sussex now had to chase 193. Starting the third day on 40 for one, they collapsed to 113 for six. Greig joined Colin Wells and took Sussex to 186. With victory in sight, both fell to ill-judged strokes and le Roux fell immediately afterwards; Sussex 190 for nine. Two runs later David Smith edged Terry Alderman to Chris Tavare at slip: the first tie in 10 years of Championship cricket.

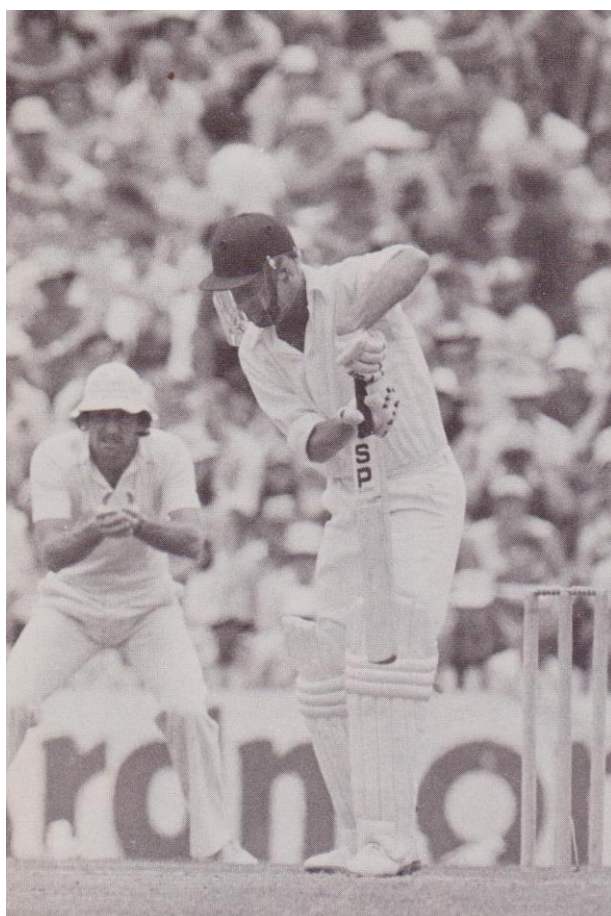
So Derek Underwood's career, drawing to a close, featured another wonderful innings as a nightwatchman through which his last remaining ambition was fulfilled; a first-class century. "Despite all his great success as a bowler, what he will treasure most is the century he scored against Sussex in 1984", said Fred Trueman. His long-time partner in wicket-taking, Alan Knott remembered:

"That century, on a very bad wicket, was remarkable because he completely dominated the innings against an attack which included a world-class bowler like Garth Le Roux. Underwood gave only one chance, to skipper John Barclay at second slip when he had scored 96."

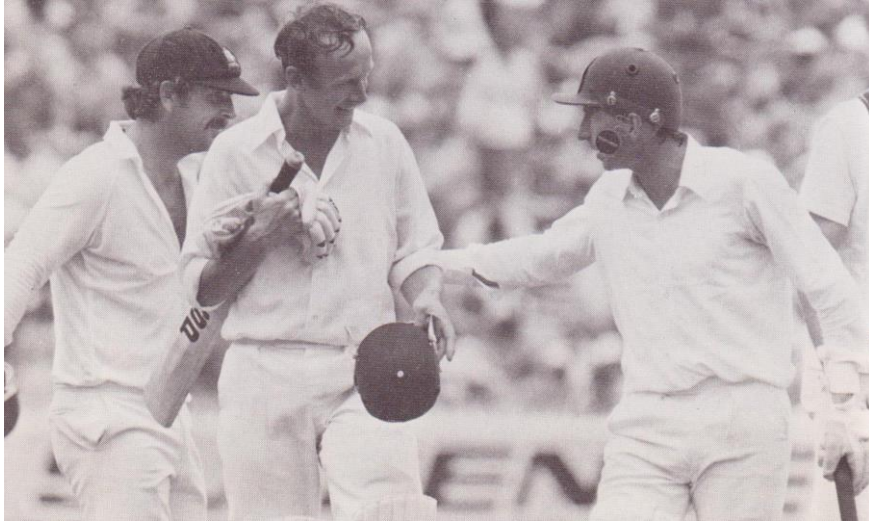




Blasted Spinners! Derek Underwood edges Bishen Bedi to Eknath Solkar to end his first stint as nightwatchman against India in 1974. Sunil Gavaskar, who will make his first century against England in India's innings, watches from a very close silly point (*Getty Images*)



Underwood inches England out of danger at Sydney in 1980 (*Eric Piper*)



Two Dereks walk off for lunch at Sydney: for Underwood a well-earned cigarette (*Eric Piper*)

References

- Amiss, Dennis with Michael Carey, *In Search of Runs: An Autobiography*, Stanley Paul, 1976.
- Bailey, Trevor and Fred Trueman, *The Spinners' Web*, Willow Books, 1988.
- Border, Allan, *Beyond Ten Thousand*, Swan Publishing Pty Ltd, 1993.
- Boycott, Geoff, *Boycott: The Autobiography*, Macmillan, 1987.
- Breareley, Mike, *The Art of Captaincy*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1985.
- Chappell, Ian with Ashley Mallett, *Hitting Out: The Ian Chappell Story*, Orion, 2005.
- Cozier, Tony, *The West Indies: Fifty Years of Test Cricket*, Angus & Robertson, 1978.
- Denness, Mike, *I Declare*, Arthur Barker, 1977.
- Fletcher, Keith, *Captain's Innings: an autobiography*, Stanley Paul, 1983.
- Foot, David, *Zed*, World's Work Ltd The Windmill Press, 1983.
- Gavaskar, Sunil, *Idols*, George Allen & Unwin, 1984.
- Gibson, Alan, *The Cricket Captains of England*, The Pavilion Library, 1989.
- Gower, David with Martin Johnson, *Gower: The Autobiography*, Fontana, 1993.
- Lemmon, David, *Changing Seasons: A History of Cricket in England, 1945-1996*, Andre Deutsch, 1997.
- Knott, Alan, *It's Knott Cricket: The Autobiography of Alan Knott*, Macmillan, 1985.
- Pocock, Pat with Patrick Collins, *Percy: The Perspicacious Memoirs of a Cricketing Man*, Clifford Frost Publications, 1987.
- Randall, Derek in conjunction with Alan Lee, *The Sun has got his Hat on*, Willow Books, 1984.
- Ryan, Christian, *Golden Boy: Kim Hughes and the bad old days of Australian cricket*, Allen & Unwin, 2009.
- Snow, John, *Cricket Rebel: An Autobiography*, Hamlyn, 1976.
- Swanton, E.W. edited by George Plumptre, *Back Page Cricket: A Century of Newspaper Coverage*, MacDonald Queen Anne Press, 1987.
- Swanton, E.W., with David Rayvern Allen, *Last Over*, Richard Cohen Books, 1996.
- Underwood, Derek, *Beating the Bat*, Stanley Paul, 1975.
- Underwood, Derek, *Deadly Down Under, England in Australia 1979-80*, Arthur Barker, 1980.